

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1405

July 14, 2022

United States Department of Transportation
Docket Operations, M-30
West Building Ground Floor
Room W12-140
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today to strongly urge the FAA to properly consider the Petition of Republic Airways Inc. for Exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 61.160(a), which is now pending in Docket FAA-2022-0535.

As you know, our country is currently experiencing a domestic pilot shortage that has been perpetuated by legislation which requires a 600% increase in pilot minimum flight hour requirements. It is estimated that in 2022, U.S. regional carriers will lose 11,000 experienced pilots and will replace them with only 6,000 new entrant pilots. This 5,000 pilot deficit will reduce the regional carrier workforce nearly 30% and eliminate 400 regional aircraft from service over the course of 2022.

Republic Airways has petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for an exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 61.160(a). This exemption, if granted, would help address the current pilot shortage and would reduce the unnecessary and significant economic, financial, and other barriers to entry that otherwise prevent a more diverse and talented pool of prospective student pilots from pursuing this career. Furthermore, it adds another pathway to airline transport pilot certification akin to the alternative reduced-hours pathways in § 61.160(a)(1) and § 61.160(a)(2) without any adverse safety effect, and allows aspiring commercial airline pilots to meet the flight time requirements for a Restricted Air Transport Pilot certificate (R-ATP) through intense, focused, closed loop training at the Leadership In Flight Training (LIFT) Academy, managed by Republic Airways, a Part 121 air carrier.

Congress has given the FAA the authority to determine whether alternative training pathways will enhance safety more than requiring the pilots to merely comply with the 1,500 flight hours requirement of the Airline Safety Act. Republic's R-ATP program presents a highly structured, mission-specific training curriculum focused on training students to be Part 121 airline pilots that solves the "time building" flight hours requirement that is exacerbating the pilot shortage. Data-driven studies produced by Republic Airways show that LIFT is producing some of the most proficient commercial pilots at Republic. The relief sought by Republic Airways is a thoughtful and constructive opportunity to start reducing the 14,500-pilot gap in the commercial airline labor market for 2022 and the unnecessary and significant barriers to entry that otherwise prevent a more diverse and talented pool of prospective student pilots from pursuing this career.

Republic Airways' Headquarters, and many of their employees, reside in my Congressional district, and I strongly urge the FAA to grant proper consideration to their requested exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 61.160(a).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Victoria Spartz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping flourish at the end of the last name.

Victoria Spartz.
Member of Congress (IN-05)